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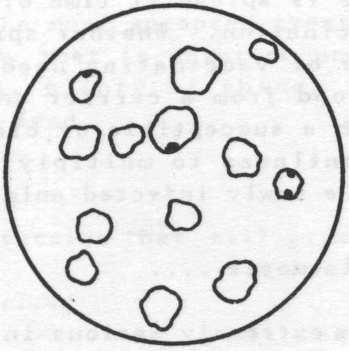
ANAPLASMOSIS OF CATTLE



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ANAPLASMOSIS OF CATTLE

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Stockmen should be and are becoming familiar with a disease that is spreading rather rapidly throughout Texas and the Southwest. Anaplasmosis is a disease of the blood caused by a parasite (Anaplasma marginale) that destroys red blood cells. The death rate seems to vary somewhat with the individual herds. In Texas, the disease is seasonal and the number of affected animals is greatest in the summer and fall months.

Spread of Anaplasmosis.....

This blood parasite is transmitted from one animal to another by various means. Commonly, it is transmitted by ticks, mosquitoes and biting flies. Another method of transmission is by mechanical means, and often the disease is spread at time of castration, dehorning, and vaccination. Whether spread by insects, castrating knife or vaccinating needle a very small amount of the blood from a carrier animal is brought into contact with a susceptible or clean animal. The parasite then continues to multiply and destroy red blood cells in the newly infected animal.

Symptoms of Anaplasmosis.....

The disease is extremely serious in mature animals. Cattle under one year of age seldom die with the disease. The symptoms vary considerably. Animals may die quite suddenly and thus resemble anthrax or poisoning; they may show general weakness, anemia, and carry a high temperature for several days, or finally, they may show the chronic form in which they stay feverish, have little appetite and present the *usual anemic* or *jaundice appearance*, which is considered typical of the disease.

Diagnosis.....

Livestock authorities, who have had experience with the disease, will sometimes make a diagnosis on the appearance of the animals. A yellowish appearance of the eyes and lining surfaces of the mouth is usually present. The blood presents a pale, watery appearance. *However*, an accurate diagnosis can only be made by a microscopic examination of the blood. The presence of these parasites can be shown in a blood smear. In a suspected case of anaplasmosis a blood smear should be made.

Treatment.....

To date, there is no effective medicinal treatment available. Several anti-malarial drugs have shown promise on an experimental basis. Veterinarians have had some success in giving general strengthening drugs and in some cases blood transfusions have been of value. But it must be borne in mind, *there is at present no specific cure.*

Basically, the most accepted treatment consists of good nursing. By that is meant no unnecessary moving of such animals, plenty of shade, fresh water and easily available feed.

Prevention.....

There is no vaccine that will prevent the disease.

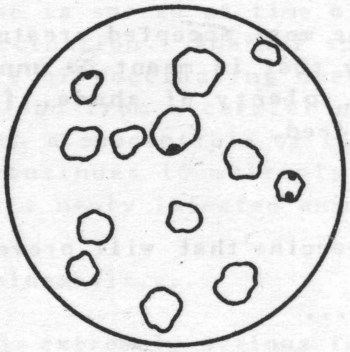
Carrier Animals.....

Carrier animals are generally defined as animals that have had the disease and have recovered. They are immune to further attacks and show no symptoms. Such recovered animals are the reservoirs of the disease and are a constant threat to the other cattle in the herd. They should be removed from the herd and sent to slaughter.

Government scientists are working on a test to

detect these carrier animals. However, it is not perfected or in general use. Any animal that has been diagnosed as having anaplasmosis and recovers should not be left in any herd. It is believed the rapid spreading of anaplasmosis is due to recovered or carrier animals being left in the herd or sold into another group of cattle. When a practical test for detecting carrier animals is available, we will be in a position to combat this important disease.

Grateful acknowledgment is given Dr. R. D. Turk, Head, Department of Veterinary Parasitology, Texas A. and M. College, for assistance in the preparation of this leaflet.



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